

our turn are closer to Rome than Athens.
 So that the
 Latin writers, like our own, have talked
 less of the im-
 portance of talking little. And yet from our
 earlier
 literature, of that period when England is
 alleged to have
 been 'merry', and its levity unfavourably
 contrasted with
 the gravity of France, there survive still a
 good many
 counterparts of those endless Greek adages
 on the ex-
 cellence of reticence.

Whatsoever be in thy brest,
 Stop thy mouth with thy fist,
 And lok thou think well of had-I-wist,
 And bere a home and blow it naught.

If thou dost harbour sorrow, let not thine arrow
 know it; whisper
 it but to thy saddle-bow and ride abroad with song.

Or, more vividly:

Wikked tunge breketh bone,
 Thow the tonges self hath none:

which is much more pointed than its
 Hebrew original in
Proverbs; 'By long forbearing is a prince
 persuaded, and
 a soft tongue breaketh the bone.' Such,
 too, was the ^
 moral impressed by his mother, with a none
 too edifying
 story of a heathen god, on Chaucer's
 Maunciple—

Heed wel thy tong and think upon the crow.
 But, after all, such precepts are world-
 wide: even in
 far Arabia 'the tree of silence bears the
 fruit of peace.
 Aphorisms are of interest less for their
 truth than for
 their style; less for their collective wisdom
 than for the
 humour of their incessant contradictions of
 one another;
 less for the light they throw on conduct
 than for that
 other light they throw on the characters
 which coined

them. For the modern mind is incredulous
of homespun
wisdom, and inclined to dismiss all saws
and adages to
the cheese-trenchers and porridge-bowls of
shops dedi-
cated to the arts and crafts* The proverbs of
the populace,